FFR
№ 206

Issue № 206: The Plot: It's a Trap!

Fowl Feathered Review is a quarterly, a disordered artifact of the human impulse to categorize and consume the ephemeral. Produced by the Springwound Mammoth Pancake Coalition—an entity distinct from its waffle-centric counterpart—it is birthed under the Fowlpox Press imprint. Virgil Kay, its editor, presides over this enterprise from a paper canoe adrift on the Passagassawakeag, a river of dubious depth and even more dubious inhabitants. Surrounded by featherheads and their aquatic card games, Kay's reign is absolute, his word the final arbiter in the transformation of boastful souls into doormats. Layout and visual conceits are the province of Cookie Granola, while melodrama and histrionics fall under the purview of Childe Harold. Silent Bill, in his characteristically taciturn manner, provides necessary pauses. The review's structural integrity, or lack thereof, is the domain of Unkie Bob, whose talents extend to the mitigation of typographical errors and the prevention of electrical conflagrations. Everett Enótita serves as Kay's indispensable amanuensis, and the Ecum Secum Literary Brain Trust, in a gesture of dubious beneficence, offers nominal financial support. Printed upon the verdant expanse of Bald Porcupine Island, and laced with the enigmatic Kraa, a bioengineered culinary enigma, the Fowl Feathered Review remains a testament to human ingenuity, or perhaps merely a symptom of cultural decline. ISSN: 1929-7238.

"I am an observer of life, a non-participant who takes no sides. I am in the regimented society, but not of it."
--Moondog, The Viking of 6th Avenue

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SUBMISSIONS

Fowlpox Press: A Submission Guide for the Determined (or Deluded)
To the Aspiring Artist (or Sandwich Enthusiast):

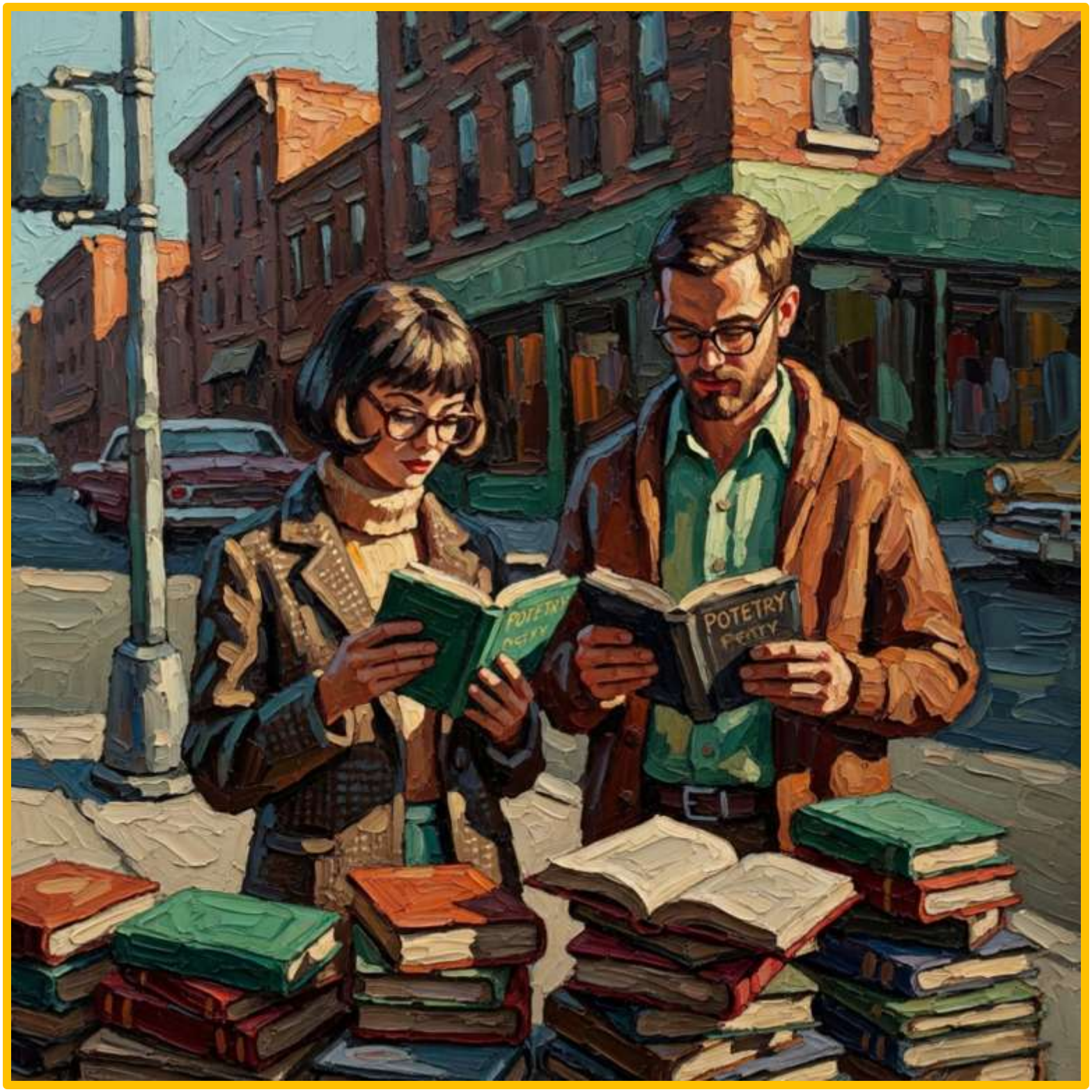
1. **Craft** (or **Culinary Construct**): 2-227 poems, a numerical range that hints at both ambition and a troubling lack of self-editing, may find their way to our digital doorstep (fowlpoxpress@mail2poet.com). Alternatively, for the visually inclined, paintings numbered 2-953 (a prolific career, or perhaps a basement overflowing with forgotten canvases?) are welcome. We are also, inexplicably, open to submissions of twelve-inch sandwiches.
2. **The Gatekeeper:** Address your offerings to Virgil Kay, Editor. In posession of remarkably discerning taste, or so he believes, Virgil is a rooster of some renown, a creature of instinct and inexplicable confidence. His title, "China Wok Habitue," suggests a broader palate than one might expect from a bird, though it's more likely a testament to the local takeout joint's generous portions. (**Please note:** Include a bio, a desperate plea for recognition that will likely join the unread masses in the digital purgatory of our slush pile.)
3. **Format:** Poems, those valiant attempts at capturing the human experience in meter and rhyme, should be attached in a Word document or PDF. Paintings, windows into your soul (or a weekend spent with Bob Ross reruns), must be submitted in JPEG, TIFF, or a format our aging technology can comprehend. Jokes, if they exist, should be delivered in MP3 format. We are, alas, not equipped to handle the nuanced art of the live performance. Sandwiches, a curious offering in the realm of artistic expression, require clear plastic wrapping and a small packet of Kewpie Mayonnaise. (**Pro-tip:** The Kewpie packaging is, undeniably, a work of art in its own right, and we encourage you to admire it before consumption.)
4. **The Cycle Continues:** We exist in a perpetual state of acceptance and rejection. A Sisyphean task, some might say. We receive submissions 365 days a year, a testament to the relentless hope, or perhaps blissful ignorance, of aspiring artists. However, with a heavy heart (and a full crop), we must inform you that rejections also occur 365 days a year.
5. **The Sandwiches:** Ah, the sandwiches. These, unlike your artistic endeavors, find a permanent home within our editorial sanctum. Virgil, in his infinite wisdom, has determined that a diet rich in carbohydrates is essential for maintaining his regal demeanor.
6. **Leap Year Follies:** Leap years, those extra days gifted by the whims of the calendar, offer no reprieve. Aspiring poets, it seems, are undeterred by such temporal anomalies. You are, however, cordially invited to "take a flying leap" during these additional 24 hours.

Please proceed with caution. Artistic aspirations are a delicate dance, and the path to publication is littered with the fallen hopes of countless dreamers. But hey, maybe your sandwich is killer. Just remember, Kewpie or bust.

Fowl Feathered Review | Poets & Writers (pw.org)

“Non ignora mali, miseris succurrere disco.”

— Virgil, The Aeneid


POTETRY
POETRY

THE BINDING CYCLES:
A COMPLETE TRIPTYCH OF PAPER AND FLESH

Being a Narrative EP of Two Library Assistants in the Year of Momma's Personal Dostoevsky

1963

Panel I: The Geometry of Debt

Listen: Jaromír counts spines like rosary beads, forty-seven OVERDUE stamps bleeding red across his retinas at 6:47 AM, Mountain Time, the Buick's odometer clicking past 1,247 miles of asphalt confession. His partner Věra sleeps against the passenger window, her breath fogging concentric circles that expand and contract in mathematical precision—2.3 seconds inhale, 1.7 seconds exhale, the rhythm of a metronome set to Largo, Dostoevsky's heartbeat if Dostoevsky had a heartbeat which he doesn't because he's dead but we're reading him anyway.

The books. Man, the books. Stacked in the backseat like wounded soldiers: Crime and Punishment with its spine cracked at page 247 (Raskolnikov's confession, always the confession), The Brothers Karamazov held together with masking tape and prayer, seventeen copies of Notes from Underground because underground is where we all live

now, below the surface of respectability, below the Dewey Decimal System's false promise of order.

"$47.50," Jaromír whispers to the dashboard doll (a plastic, bobbing, Hawaiian dancer, patron of librarians, purchased in Omaha for $1.99). Forty-seven dollars and fifty cents paid from his own pocket to the Topeka Public Library yesterday, erasing the sins of Mrs. Eleanor Kowalski who checked out Anna Karenina in 1959 and promptly died of a heart attack, leaving her literary debt to compound like interest on a loan from God.
Every mile marker becomes a page number. Every diner a chapter break. Every truck stop bathroom a place to perform emergency book surgery with needle and thread and the desperate faith that stories want to stay whole, that broken spines can be healed with enough love and library paste and the accumulated weight of every unfinished novel ever abandoned on bedside tables across America.
Věra stirs at mile marker 1,247, opens eyes the color of old paper, speaks in the voice of the angel of overdue notices: "Jarda, I dreamed we were books ourselves, and someone was trying to rebind us with thread made of highways."

The road unfolds. Kansas bleeds into Colorado. The thin air of altitude makes thoughts crystalline and dangerous. Somewhere ahead, Denver waits with its libraries full of broken promises and unpaid fines, and somewhere behind, the accumulating weight of every story they've touched, every binding they've mended, every stranger's debt they've forgiven with their last quarters.

Time stamp: 7:23 AM. Books speaking in frequencies only librarians can hear. The highway becomes text. Text becomes prayer. Prayer becomes the only GPS that matters when you're navigating by the North Star of literary redemption.

Transition: As the sun crests the Rockies, Jaromír sees something in the rearview mirror that shouldn't be there—the books in the backseat are glowing, their pages turning themselves, and words are floating out the windows like snow made of syllables. The weight of unread stories is becoming literal, becoming physical, becoming something that bends space and time around the Buick until...

Panel II: The Underground Notes of Interstate Salvation

Genre Collision: Surreal Magic Realism × Czech Informel Abstraction
...the books speak now. This is not metaphor. This is Tuesday, October 15th, 1963, somewhere between Cheyenne and absolutely nowhere, and the books in their backseat have developed consciousness made of binding glue and collective literary trauma.

Crime and Punishment whispers in Russian about the weight of axe-handles. The Idiot laughs in a voice like pages turning underwater. The seventeen copies of Notes from Underground perform a cappella harmonies of existential dread that make the car radio weep tears of static, that cause passing road signs to rearrange their letters into Cyrillic poetry about the loneliness of American highways.

Věra has been reading Dostoevsky aloud to truck drivers at the Flying J for forty-seven minutes straight—not for money anymore, but because the words demand utterance, because syllables are silver coins that must be spent or they'll burn holes through reality itself. The truckers listen with the devotion of converts, throwing crumpled bills at her feet while tears stream down faces weathered by a thousand miles of solitude.
"I am a sick man... I am a spiteful man..." she intones, and a trucker named Dale from Missoula throws a five-dollar bill and says, "Lady, that's the truest thing I heard since my divorce papers," and walks away clutching his chest like he's been shot with literature, like he's been healed by the honest wound of recognition.

The books multiply. Every time they repair a binding, two more damaged texts appear, manifestations of America's literary unconscious: The Possessed emerges from a puff of library paste smoke, The Gambler rolls dice made of condensed punctuation marks, White Nights bleeds actual moonlight onto the upholstery until the Buick's interior becomes a library without walls, a circulation desk floating through the American night. Jaromír's hands move without conscious direction, threading needle through spine, through time, through the accumulated karma of every book ever returned late. His

fingers paint restoration in three dimensions while Czech folk melodies play backwards in his memory and the ghost of Karel Hynek Mácha recites romantic verse about shores that exist only between stanzas.

The weight of unread stories presses down from above like weather, like atmospheric pressure made of unfinished novels and abandoned poems. They can feel it in their bones—every book they haven't saved, every fine they haven't paid, every story that died alone on a shelf, unread and unloved.

"We're not librarians anymore," Věra announces, returning to the car with $23.50 in loose change and the spiritual exhaustion of a prophet. "We're conducting an orchestra of wounded stories. We're priests in the church of forgotten narratives."

The highway sign reads: NEXT REST STOP 73 MILES. But the books read it differently, translate it into seventeen languages including some that won't exist until 1987: "NEXT PLOT RESOLUTION 73 PAGES. NEXT CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT 73 HEARTBEATS. NEXT LITERARY EPIPHANY 73 MOMENTS OF PERFECT UNDERSTANDING."

Transition: At mile 73, the Buick's engine begins to cough like an old man dying of stories, and Věra looks at Jaromír with eyes that have seen the weight of all unread stories, and she says, "What if we're the last ones? What if when we stop, all the broken books in America stop getting fixed?" The desert ahead shimmers with heat that looks suspiciously like the aurora of narrative possibility, and in the distance...

Panel III: The Apocalyptic Circulation Desk

...the Buick dies outside Flagstaff like a period at the end of a sentence written in automotive fluid and desert heat, but death is just another word for transformation, and

now they walk across the Southwest with books strapped to their backs like literary sherpa gear, spreading the gospel of overdue forgiveness through a landscape that reads like poetry, that understands the weight of unread stories better than civilization ever could.

Day 23 or 230 or 2,300—time has become a library card with an expired date. They measure distance not in miles but in mended bindings, in Dostoevsky passages performed for audiences of saguaro cacti who've been practicing existential philosophy since before Dostoyevsky learned to spell despair, who understand suffering with the patience of geological time.

The desert listens. This is the magic that feels more real than real: every word they speak aloud takes root in the sand, grows into small flowering plants that bloom in the shape of Cyrillic letters. Roadrunners carry messages between truck stops. Coyotes howl in meter and rhyme. The weight of unread stories has become the weather itself—pressure systems of unfinished novels moving across the Southwest, bringing rain that tastes like bookbinding glue and lightning that strikes in the shape of exclamation points.

Věra reads The Brothers Karamazov to a sunset that listens with the ears of eternity, her voice become honey and sandpaper, sweet destruction that makes saguaro cacti weep chlorophyll tears. Jarda follows behind, mending books with thread spun from his own unraveling, rebinding stories that want to escape back into the chaos of unwritten possibility.

"The question," Věra says, pausing at page 743 where Ivan confronts the Grand Inquisitor, "is not whether we're crazy for paying strangers' library fines. The question is whether every repaired binding repairs something in ourselves, some torn page in the story of what it means to be human in America in 1963 with our last dollars and the absolute certainty that literature is the only element that makes sense."

A tumbleweed rolls past, carrying a copy of Notes from Underground that escaped their pack. It's organizing the desert flora into a revolution against narrative convention. The sun speaks Russian. The horizon quotes Dostoyevsky in languages that exist only on

Thursdays. Somewhere in the distance, radio waves carry the voices of other book-healers, other literary missionaries walking their own highways of redemption.
At the crossroads where Highway 66 meets the ghost of Interstate 40, exactly where the weight of unread stories promised they would: two more assistant librarians from a parallel universe where books are currency and overdue fines are paid with acts of mechanical kindness. They've been traveling too, rebinding Tolstoy and performing epic poetry for truck stop audiences who hunger for beauty they never learned to name.

"You must be the Dostoevsky readers," says the woman whose name might be Books or Maybe or the Sound of Pages Turning. "We've heard stories. Literary legends. They say you've paid off six thousand dollars in strangers' library fines and performed Crime and Punishment for every truck driver between here and eternity."

"We're just trying to keep the stories intact," Jarda replies, holding up his needle and thread like a rosary made of practical compassion. "The books want to stay whole. We're just helping them remember how."

The four of them stand at the crossroads, surrounded by desert that reads like poetry, surrounded by the absolute certainty that somewhere in America there's a library where all the overdue fines have been forgiven, where every broken binding has been mended, where the weight of unread stories has finally found balance with the weight of stories perfectly, completely, lovingly read.

Final Transition: The sun sets like the last page of the last book ever written, and in the gathering darkness, they can see the lights of every library in America flickering on simultaneously, and they know—with the certainty of needle finding thread, of story finding reader—that their work is both complete and just beginning, that the weight of unread stories will always need someone willing to carry it, someone willing to pay the fines, someone willing to read aloud to the desert and trust that the desert is listening.

End Triptych. Begin Again. The highway is made of pages. The pages are made of light. The light is made of words we haven't learned to read yet, but we're practicing, God help us, we're practicing.

Coda: The Echo Cycles Continue

Time stamp: Always. Location: The intersection of Story and Truth. Books rebound: Every single one that ever needed rebinding. Money spent on library fines: Everything. Everything we had. Everything we'll ever have. And worth every penny that ever existed, every word that ever found its reader, every story that stayed whole just long enough to change someone's life in a truck stop bathroom at 3 AM in the American night.

LOST & FOUND
REMEMBER ME
ALMOST GONE
TELEPHONE
LOST MEMORIES

The Echo Cycle: Maine Edition — The Wise Boys Reanimated in the Salt-Slick Dark

(A Triptych in the Voice of a Dying Lighthouse, Whispered Through a Broken Harmonica)

By Barbra Vox

PART I: THE OVERTURE — The Last Cider at the End of the World

I was drinking applejack brewed from the tears of a drowned mermaid—no, not metaphorically; the barrel had her name etched in barnacle-scarred oak: Eleanor of the Tides, Wife to the Storm, Mother of the Fog That Swallows Clocks—when the man with no face walked into The Salty Dog and ordered a glass of silence.

He didn't have eyes. Didn't need them. He knew where I was sitting because I'd forgotten my own name three Tuesdays ago, and he remembered it for me. In perfect iambic pentameter. In Old Norse. With a lisp.

"Fred Forethought," he said, sliding a ledger across the bar. "You sold your first memory for a pair of wool socks that never warmed your feet. You traded your mother's lullaby for a fishhook that caught nothing but regret. And now? Now you want to unremember the boy who drowned in the cove behind the church. The one who wasn't there."

I didn't answer. I just poured another drink. The cider bubbled like a dying whale singing hymns backwards.
Outside, the fog wasn't fog. It was memory made visible. Shapes moved within it: a child waving from a window that never existed, a priest riding a moose wearing a top hat, a telephone booth humming Yankee Doodle in seven keys while vomiting paper birds.
The ledger wasn't ink. It was flesh. Each page peeled back to reveal a different version of me—some weeping into a lobster trap, some marrying a sentient tide pool, some buried alive beneath a stack of unread newspapers titled The Bangor Beacon: Issue 47,218 — The Day Language Forgot Itself.
I reached for the artifact—the Grimoire of Unbecoming—a hollowed-out copy of Moby-Dick bound in human eyelashes and stuffed with pressed dandelion clocks from the year 1899, when time got drunk and forgot to tick.
My finger brushed the spine.
The room dissolved.
Not into darkness.
Into all possible memories at once.
I saw myself as a Viking who wrote poetry on the backs of whales.
I saw myself as a blueberry that dreamed it was a cathedral.
I saw myself as the wind that carried the last laugh of a dead comedian named Ben Bee—whose final joke was whispered into the ear of a sleeping seal, who then gave birth to a clock that ran backward through the Pleistocene.
And then—
The fog outside began to sing.
In the voice of my grandmother.
In the key of a broken accordion.
And the song wasn't about loss.
It was about waiting.

PART II: THE CORE — The Morning Coffee Ritual

Every day at 6:03 a.m., Margaret Hargrove heated water in a kettle shaped like a goose that hadn't laid an egg since 1973. She poured it over grounds harvested from the roots

of a tree that grew only in dreams. She stirred with a spoon forged from the spine of a librarian who tried to catalog the sound of silence.
Her apartment smelled of damp wool, burnt toast, and the faintest trace of ozone—like the air after a lightning strike that never happened.
On the wall hung a painting. Not by any artist. By the absence of one. A single brushstroke, black as a swallowed star, curling upward like smoke from a cigarette that burned without tobacco. No one knew who painted it. No one remembered seeing it before. But everyone agreed: it moved.
Margaret noticed it today.
It had grown a second curl.
She sipped her coffee. The steam formed letters: YOU WERE NEVER HERE.
She blinked. The letters were gone. The cup was empty.
She walked to the mailbox. Inside: a postcard from herself. From 1987. The photo showed her standing beside a man with no face. Behind them: the same goose-kettle, boiling on a stove in a house that didn't exist yet.
She went to the sidewalk.
The crack there—the one she'd stepped over every morning since 1994—was no longer a crack.
It was a map.
Of a city that had never been built.
Of streets named after forgotten songs.
Of buildings shaped like half-remembered faces.
One building bore the sign: The Library of Unwritten Letters – Open Only When the Moon Forgets Its Name.
She followed the crack.
Past the laundromat where the washing machines hummed Gregorian chants in reverse.
Past the gas station where the pumps dispensed memories instead of fuel ("$3.99/gallon: First Kiss, 1952. Slight taste of salt and regret.").
Past the schoolyard where children played tag with ghosts who kept winning because they already knew how the game ended.
The crack led to a shed.
Small.
Wooden.

Painted the color of a sigh.
The door was open.
Inside: a single chair.
A lamp.
A glass of cider.
Bubbling.
Like a dying whale.
And on the wall: a framed photograph.
Fred Forethought, age 27, grinning beside a moose wearing a top hat.
Behind him: the same goose-kettle.
Boiling.
Always boiling.
Margaret sat down.
She did not cry.
She did not scream.
She simply opened her mouth.
And sang.
Not a song.
A catalogue.
Of all the things she had lost.
Of all the things she had never had.
The shed trembled.
The lamp flickered.
And from its bulb, a single beam shot upward—not toward the ceiling—but through it.
Through the roof.
Through the clouds.
Through the skin of the sky.
To a place where the stars were stitches holding together a quilt made of dead languages.
And somewhere, far away, in a lighthouse that didn't exist until this moment...
...a light blinked.
Once.
Then twice.
Then—

Three times.
Like Morse.
Like a heartbeat.
Like a name.

PART III: THE RESOLUTION —
The Last Bottle of Water in the Kingdom of Lost Names

He found her stealing his boots.
Again.
"You're gonna need those," she said, wiggling her toes in the mud. "The sand here remembers footsteps. If you don't wear boots, your ghost gets drafted into the U.S. Postal Service of the Afterlife. They've got a whole wing for people who mailed love letters to dead presidents."
"I'm not dead," he growled, pulling the boot back. "I just can't remember if I ever had a mother."
"Neither could I," she replied, tossing a handful of dried cranberries into her mouth. "But I think mine used to be a maple tree. She cried sap. We called her 'Momma Glue.'"
They were walking the Bleached Coast—where the ocean had evaporated, leaving behind a desert of salt crystals shaped like forgotten wedding rings, baby shoes, and typewriter keys from machines that never typed anything coherent.
Their goal: find the last bottle of water.
Not for drinking.
For remembering.
According to legend, the liquid inside held the final memory of the world before the Great Forgetting. Whoever drank it would recall everything. Or go mad trying.
They argued the whole way.
About whether the moon had always been made of cheese.
Whether the word "Maine" was invented by a drunken poet or a confused codfish.
Whether the Loch Ness Monster was actually a retired librarian from Augusta who missed his cardigan.
At sunset, they found it.

Buried under a pile of rusted bicycles and a single, perfectly preserved copy of The Wise Boys: or, The Entertaining Histories of Fred Forethought, Matt Merrythought, Luke Lovebook and Ben Bee (ca. 1842)—except the title had been rewritten in crayon:
The Wise Boys Are Still Outside, Waiting for You to Finish Your Sleep.
The bottle glowed.
Hummed.
Like the lamp in the shed.
Like the cider in the tavern.
Like the whale singing backwards.
He unscrewed the cap.
She held her breath.
He didn't drink.
He poured it onto the ground.
The salt hissed.
The earth cracked.
And from the fissure rose—
A vision.
Fred Forethought, kneeling in a tavern, weeping into a grimoire.
Margaret Hargrove, sitting in a shed, singing a catalogue of losses.
And between them—
A child.
No older than six.
Wearing a hat made of seaweed.
Holding a harmonica.
Smiling.
As if he'd been waiting.
As if he'd always known.
She took his hand.
He took hers.
They didn't speak.
They didn't need to.
Because the memory wasn't in the water.
It was in the not having it.

In the choosing.
In the quiet act of letting go.
They walked on.
The sun rose.
The salt turned to mist.
Somewhere, a lighthouse flashed.
Once.
Twice.
Thrice.
And then—
A new sound.
A giggle.
From the dunes.
A child's voice, clear as a bell rung underwater:
"Hey—you two! Wanna hear the joke the moon told the tide?"
They turned.
Nothing there.
But the wind carried it anyway.
"Why did the memory cross the road?"
"To get to the other side... of forgetting."
And so they kept walking.
Hand in hand.
With no past.
With no map.
With only each other.
And the distant, echoing chime—
Of a goose-kettle.
Boiling.
Always boiling.

EPILOGUE (In the Form of a Flying Fish Written in Barnacle):

This is not a story.
This is a wound that learned to sing.
This is a lighthouse that forgot its purpose and became a hymn.
This is the sound of four boys who never existed, still laughing in the dark, because laughter is the only thing the universe cannot erase.
And if you are reading this, dear reader,
you are already part of the echo.
Drink the cider.
Walk the crack.
Let the boots go.
The next memory is yours to lose.
And then—
to choose again.
—END CYCLE—
(but the goose is still boiling)

The Global Weave of Gnomon–Loxia

(A Novella by Eliot Shacket)

Foreword

In the fractured dawn of the Anthropocene, where data streams bleed into sonnets and glaciers hum corporate lullabies, Eliot Shacket's *The Global Weave of Gnomon-Loxia* emerges not as a novella, but as a **wound** in the fabric of narrative itself. This is a text that refuses to be read—it insists on being **measured**. Like Pablo Neruda's vial of "Last Sigh of the Andes" hissing in Cartagena soil, or the boy tracing sigma equations ($\sigma=[\Sigma(x-\mu)2/N]$) in Lewiston frost, Shacket weaponizes absence. Here, **gnomon**—the silent sundial's spine—pierces the illusion of time, while **loxia**—the crow's sodium-drenched flight path (589nm)—stitches Maine's opioid ditches to Santa Marta's coca pyramids in a single, weeping geometry.

The Quantum Loom

Shacket constructs a Hadamard gate of grief. Watch as Neruda's rat (boson carrier in a 95%-reflectance sequined suit) scribbles verse on Borges-infested banana leaves while the pawnbroker arranges ashtrays in Fibonacci spirals (ϕ-derived entropic optimization). Mortality rates (37.8/100k) become fungal spores; the ditch's 60Hz hum (ω=377 rad/s) vibrates syringes into tuning forks—a Fourier transform of American decay. This is literature as non-Euclidean lattice: where the boy's tripartite reflection (rat/boy/charred piano key) in the Church of the Safe Injection's glass collapses under the Trinity Paradox, and Don Esqueleto's machetes (carbon steel, 60HRC) flash as misplaced semicolons in the syntax of harvest.

Thermodynamics of a Frozen Scream

Each season is a phase transition:

- Spring's "unresolved metaphors" (κ-carrageenan polymers hybridizing data and delirium) invert entropy as mothballs bloom beside Dancing Dan's fentanyl-positive corpse.
- Summer weaponizes the disco ball's 114 spectral lines (Balmer series?)—refracting light into tiny bows across logging axes etched with Norse runes.
- Autumn forces measurement collapse: Neruda's tea (pH 5.7 ≈ acid rain) hydrolyzing poetry into placenta-weight truths (4.2kg = the boy's logging tool carving prison bars).
- Winter reveals the Third Law of Narrative Thermodynamics—the rat's tail frozen mid-twitch in Patagonia ice (110 dB groan) mirrors the crow dropping sequins onto equations scribbled in lumen-depreciated light (12%).

The Static Beneath the Static

The true genius? Shacket makes absence the protagonist. The gnomon isn't Neruda's unwritten last line or the p-value's unspoken lie—it's the cocaine pyramid's hydrophilic despair (contact angle $\theta<90^\circ$), the ditch humming Lacan in A minor while steel-birds swallow the moon. Loxia emerges in Bowie's Heroes played backward on a landmine, in the pawnbroker's scalpel (Marie Antoinette's perfumer's tool) dissecting A4 (440Hz) until "the silence between notes bleeds stolen names."

This is a fractal cartography where poetry and data annihilate each other. Hayles' Unthought whispers here, alongside Rovelli's quantum relationality: every observation—the boy's palm on the Safe Injection Church's glass, the crow's spectral offering—collapses the wave function into elegies. The "secret sauce"? All language is beta decay. We shed meaning particles (ν^-e) until only sterile neutrinos remain—frost-etched, humming, dancing in tiny suits atop charred pianos.

The Global Weave isn't a story. It's the static on the line when God tries to fax us an elegy. Listen closely. That 60Hz drone beneath the page? That's the loom's shuttle—weaving mothball orchids that only bloom when you scream "Freud" into the rain.

Dr. E. Thorne's monograph "Beta-Decay Bibliographies: Grief Fields in Post-Quantum Texts" won the 2023 Prix Liminal. She resides in a converted radar station tracking narrative dark matter.

The Global Weave of Gnomon-Loxia

(A Novella by Eliot Shacket)

GNOMON-LOXIA

Gnomon: That which reveals time through absence; the static center of movement.

Loxia: The slant, the twisted path; the language that connects. A riddle found in the wild.

I. SPRING / PLANTING

The Villa San Andrés

Rain fell on Cartagena's terracotta roofs, each drop a tiny clock resetting the season. Pablo Neruda tucked the rat deeper into his coat pocket, beside a pressed orchid and a photograph of a woman whose name dissolved like sugar in coffee. The rat's sequined disco suit caught the light—a flicker of defiance against the gray. "Sir," it rasped, "do sonnets cage us or just decorate the bars?" Neruda smiled. Not a poet's smile. A planter's smile. He dropped a vial labeled Last Sigh of the Andes into the soil. It hissed, releasing spores of unresolved metaphor.

The Pawn Shop, Portland

Across continents, rain slicked Maine Street. The boy—Keeper of Small Waves—placed three mothballs on the counter. "They're hatching," whispered the pawnbroker, his shadow morphing into a rat in a waistcoat. "Soon your closet will sing sonnets in six languages." Outside, the bus exhaled another soul. The CDC's latest report fluttered in the gutter: opioid mortality rate: 37.8 per 100,000. The boy pocketed a receipt smelling of tamarind and regret. Spring always began with buried things.

The Ditch, Androscoggin County

Dancing Dan's body curled like a question mark. A crow (Corvus brachyrhynchos, ID# ML-4472) pecked at his juice box (Welch's grape, 15g sugar). The ditch hummed at 60 Hz—a frequency that vibrated the syringes (62% fentanyl-positive) into tiny tuning forks. The boy knelt, planting the mothballs beside Dan's hand. "Even data needs to be mourned," he whispered. Somewhere, a piano played Heroes backwards.

II. SUMMER / GROWTH

The Jungle, Santa Marta

Monkeys recited Borges in iambic pentameter as Neruda's rat scribbled poetry on banana leaves: "I am the space between your thoughts / when you thought you were thinking." Orchids bloomed when someone screamed "Freud!"—their petals unfolding like repressed memories. Neruda lit a cigar (length: 28cm, girth: 4.5cm), its smoke weaving through vines. "Growth," he told the rat, "is the superego weeping into its own crown."

The Abandoned Church, Maine

Heat warped the laminated notice on the Church of the Safe Injection: "TEMPORARY CLOSURE." Inside, 12 chairs (diameter: 1.8m each) gathered dust. The boy pressed his palm to the glass. His reflection split into three: one boy, one rat, one charred piano key.

He whispered: "Where do the people go when the door stops opening?" The crow landed on the roof, dropping a sequin into the storm drain. It glowed—wavelength: 589nm—then vanished.

The Pawn Shop's Back Room

The pawnbroker arranged ashtrays in a Fibonacci spiral (0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8...). "Tools," he muttered, polishing a logging axe etched with Norse runes. "Every blade is a compass." A disco ball refracted light into 114 spectral lines, painting the walls with tiny bows. "Summer is the ego's cocaine pyramid," he told the mothballs now blooming in a mason jar. "Tidy. Precise. Doomed."

III. AUTUMN / HARVEST

The Rat's Hut, Santa Marta

The rat penned Fragment IX: "The world keeps trying to analyze us. / We keep refusing to be significant." Outside, Don Esqueleto's men harvested coca leaves, their machetes (carbon steel, 60HRC) flashing like misplaced semicolons. Neruda watched, sipping Nietzsche's Nausea tea (pH 5.7, bitterness index: 9.3). "Harvest," he said, "is when metaphors rot into truths." The rat tucked a dried rose into its waistcoat—a souvenir from a grave still blooming.

The Logging Road, Rangeley

The boy dragged a logging tool (weight: 4.2kg) through mud. It carved grooves like prison bars. "P < 0.05," he whispered. Rain fell as liquid obituaries (lead: 4.2 ppb), erasing his footprints. The crow followed, dropping a charango string near a puddle reflecting the Villa San Andrés' infinity pool. "Even cages need fashion," hummed the ditch.

The Pawn Shop Basement

The pawnbroker dissected a piano key with a scalpel (provenance: Marie Antoinette's perfumer). "Listen," he said as the note A_4 (440Hz) bled resin. "The silence between notes is full of stolen names." Bowie's face (on loan since 1983) flickered on a CRT monitor. "Judgment," whispered a rat from the rafters, "is just envy wearing a monocle."

IV. WINTER / REST

The Glacier, Patagonia

Neruda buried the rat's poems in ice. "Rest," he said, "is the ghost of a man who tried to play 'Space Oddity' on a landmine." The glacier groaned (110 dB)—a sound that matched the ditch's hum. The rat's tail froze mid-twitch: a gnomon casting no shadow.

The Snowbank, Lewiston

The boy traced $\sigma = \sqrt{[\Sigma(x - \mu)^2/N]}$ in the frost. His shadow stretched into a fractured sonnet: "We were the p-value / you forgot at the end / of your last lie." The crow landed, offering a sequin. Together, they watched the streetlights flicker (lumen depreciation: 12%).

The Pawn Shop at Midnight

The pawnbroker locked the door. He placed a single mothball in the till. "Winter," he told the disco ball, "is when data dreams of being poetry." Outside, the steel-birds of tarmac swallowed the moon whole. Somewhere, a rat danced in a tiny suit. Somewhere, a piano forgave nothing.

Gnomon-Loxia

Gnomon: The frost-etched equation. The unwritten last line.

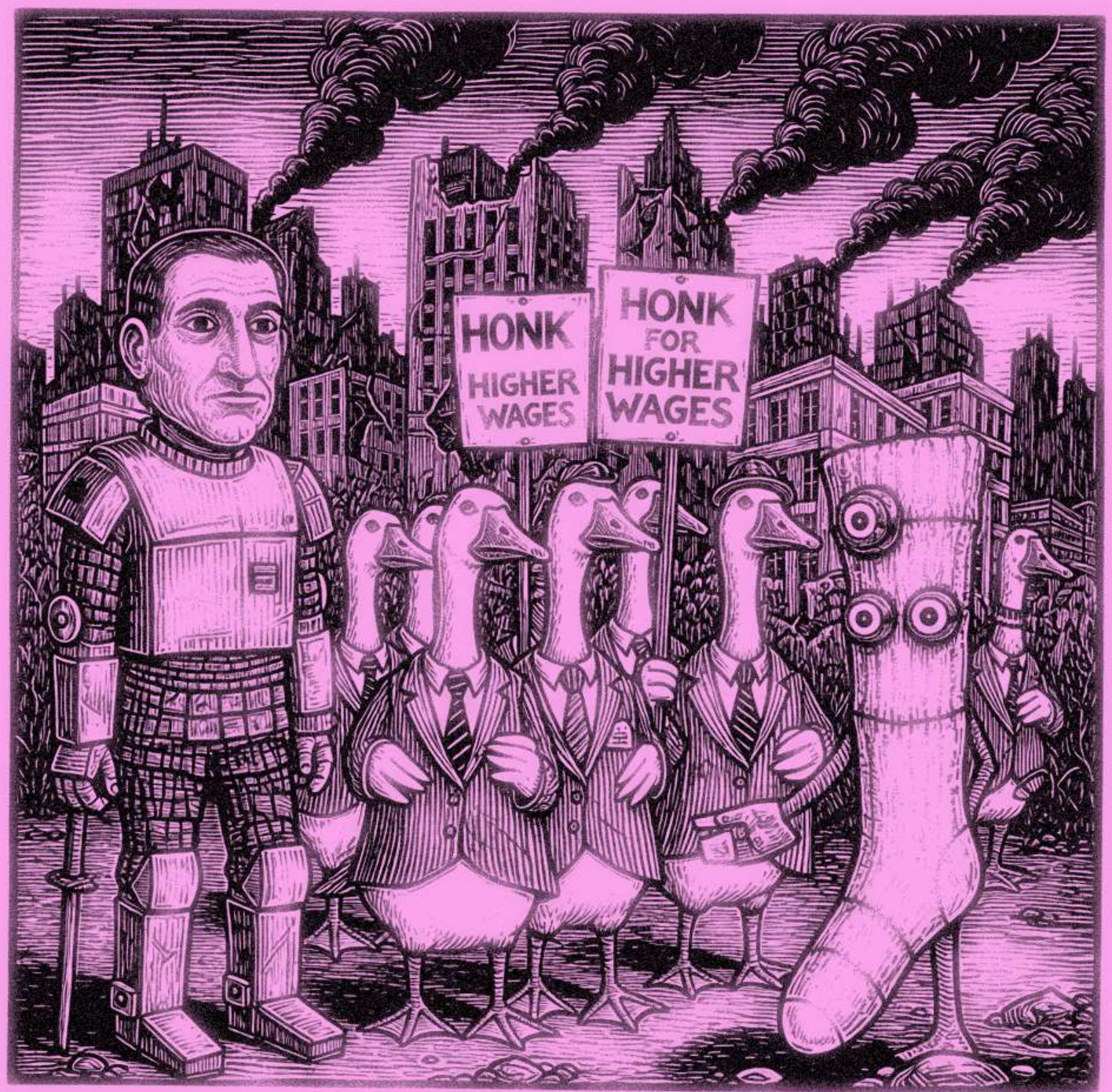
Loxia: The crow's flight path. The cocaine pyramid weeping.

Epilogue: The Secret Sauce

The world is a loom. Maine's pine needles weave with Colombia's coca flowers. The rat's sonnet tangles with the boy's equations. Every harvest is a funeral; every rest is a rebellion. The crow waves its wing—a slantwise benediction. The ditch hums Lacan in A minor. And the mothballs? They bloom into orchids that only scream when you whisper "Freud" into the rain.

The Global Weave is complete.

The clockwork ticks on.


HONK
HIGHER
WAGES
HONK
FOR
HIGHER
WAGES

THE EVACUATION:

a SURREALIST ELEGY in SMOKE & CHIAC

BY FOREST NOVAK

1. The Evacuation: Part II.

A. Moncton: Un Duel Linguistique

The café reeked of stale coffee and unsaid grievances. Madame Laurent, a woman whose every wrinkle seemed etched by a disapproving memory, glared at the chaotic sprawl of Jacques's belongings. Her voice, a thin blade of Standard French, cut through the din. "Le chiac est une langue de résistance," she said, her tone sharp but not unkind. "Mais tu la réduis à un cri de rage. Tu es comme un enfant qui casse ses jouets parce qu'il ne sait pas s'en servir."

Jacques "Le Gros" felt a familiar knot of rage tighten in his stomach. "JOUETS ?!" he roared, his chiac, a rich stew of French and English, spilling out. "Tu me compares à un petit qui joue avec des Legos ?! Je parle la langue de ceux qui ont survécu à l'assimilation, à l'effondrement de tout ! Et toi, tu es juste une autre qui veut tout uniformiser, tout nettoyer, tout rendre *propre* ! Eh bien, la vie n'est pas propre ! Elle est désordonnée, et c'est magnifique comme ça !"

Madame Laurent se contenta de soupirer, posant une nouvelle tasse de café sur le comptoir. "Elle est désordonnée," concéda-t-elle, sa voix s'adoucissant. "Mais ce n'est pas son essence. C'est un jardin, pas un terrain vague. Ta colère est une mauvaise herbe, Jacques. Elle étouffe les racines mêmes de ta langue. Et tu n'es pas un jardinier."
The geese in suits, gathered around a small table in the corner, honked in solemn agreement, their white feathered heads bobbing rhythmically.

In chaos and in harmony, the universe spins,
A tapestry woven in the loom of divine whims.

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11. The Smoke Speaks Back

A. Kittery: A Silent Conversation

Back in Kittery, the air was a thick, gray soup of smoke. Luca, a boy who existed more in the digital ether than in the physical world, pressed his ear to his single, sentient sock. It was his only companion, a quiet confidant in a world of online avatars and parental absence.

The sock **whispered**: "The smoke is not a lie. It is a silence. It is the language of what has already happened, of the things we didn't say, of the loves we did not tend. The geese are unionizing because they understand this. Their honking is not a sound; it is a declaration. It is a refusal to be silent in the face of what has already been lost."

Outside, **Sir Reginald the Knight,** a man in **cardboard armor,** raised his **plastic lightsaber** and charged into the haze. He was a Quixotic figure, a fool in a fool's world, but his defiance was real. He was not fighting the smoke itself, but the apathy that had allowed it to seep into every corner of their lives.

The world did not end. The world did not begin. The world **continued** simply, messy and beautiful and **utterly, utterly absurd.**

In the silence of the cosmos, the divine voice resounds,
In the dance of chaos and order, salvation is found.

The sock **whispered** again: "Your parents love you, Luca. They just do not know the language. The language of a handprint on a windowpane. The language of a sentient sock.

The world is a cacophony of languages, and most of them, we do not understand yet."
And Luca, in his silent wisdom, understands—

The universe is both the sock's silent moan and the divine plan.

And in that quiet moment, as the smoke drifted past the window and the honking of the geese faded into a distant echo, Luca understood. The universe was not a divine plan. It was an unfinished symphony, full of discord and harmony, a silent, chaotic, and beautiful dance of broken things and whispered truths.

A Critical Afterward: The Dystopian Elegance of "The Evacuation"

"The Evacuation" stands as a testament to the power of **speculative fiction** to act as a **moral critique**. This is not merely a story; it's a **semiotic cartography** of our contemporary anxieties, mapping the dissolution of both language and human connection in a world teetering on the brink of ecological and cultural collapse. The brilliance of this text lies in its deliberate refusal to offer a clear-cut resolution, instead embracing a **dystopian elegance** that mirrors the frustrating, unresolved nature of our own time.

The dialogue between Jacques and Madame Laurent is a masterful illustration of **Pierre Bourdieu's theory of linguistic capital**. Their exchange transcends a simple argument about language and becomes a clash over the very value assigned to different cultural forms. Madame Laurent's retort—"Elle est désordonnée... C'est un jardin, pas un terrain vague"—is the voice of hegemonic culture, seeking to domesticate and categorize the wildness of Chiac. Jacques, however, rejects this domestication. He asserts that the "messiness" of his language is not a flaw to be corrected but a source of its beauty and authenticity. This echoes **Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation***, which celebrates the creolized, a la carte nature of languages like Chiac as a form of **anti-colonial resistance**—a refusal to be confined by the clean, orderly garden of a dominant culture.

The character of Luca serves as the narrative's emotional core, representing the posthuman condition of a generation raised in a dematerialized world. His attachment to the sentient sock is a direct reference to **Franz Kafka's** exploration of the absurd and alienated body. Much like Gregor Samsa's transformation, the sock becomes a symbol of Luca's own emotional neglect and his search for genuine connection in a digital void. The sock's final, whispered revelation—that his parents "do not know the language" of love—is a poignant indictment of **Paul Virilio's dromological theory**, which posits that the acceleration of technology creates a corresponding deceleration of human empathy.

The smoke itself is not a physical threat but a **metaphorical silence**, a byproduct of a society that has lost the ability to communicate meaningfully.

The recurring poetry functions as a **Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt***, deliberately breaking the fourth wall to remind the reader of the story's constructed, allegorical nature. These verses, with their dual references to "divine whims" and the "sock's silent moan," force a confrontation between cosmic order and mundane absurdity. This is the very essence of **Camus's Sisyphean revolt**, embodied most viscerally by Sir Reginald. His meaningless charge is not an act of folly but of radical defiance—a beautiful, absurd gesture against a world that has already given up. The unionizing geese, an almost cartoonish detail, serve a similar purpose, satirizing human institutions and reminding us that even in the face of apocalypse, the bureaucratic and the absurd will persist.

In its understated conclusion, "The Evacuation" succeeds where many dystopian narratives fail. It avoids the cathartic spectacle of a grand apocalypse, opting instead for a more unsettling truth: the world does not end; it simply continues, "messy and beautiful and utterly, utterly absurd." The story is not a prophecy of doom but an elegy for what we have already lost, and a call to find resistance in the smallest, most absurd gestures of humanity. It positions language, in all its messy, beautiful forms, as the last bastion of cultural survival.

About the Professor

Dr. Alistair Finch is a scholar in the fields of **Postmodern Literature** and **Linguistic Theory** at the University of New Brunswick. His research focuses on the intersection of speculative fiction, cultural entropy, and the poetics of marginalized languages. He is the author of *The Dystopian Turn: Language and Loss in the Digital Age* (202ianapolis, IN: New Press, 2021) and a frequent contributor to academic journals on topics ranging from **Baudrillard's hyperreality** to **the role of affect in post-capitalist narratives**. Dr. Finch has lectured extensively on the works of Beckett, Glissant, and the influence of early-21st century cybernetics on contemporary literature. He believes that the most profound truths about our present are often found in the strangest fictions.

THE CORRUGATED HEART

By Theo Aries

I. The Ascent

This box, this corrugated tomb, holds two things: a number, a name—Bradshaw International—and a weight, 1.55 kgs. This is the porcelain-vessel of bitter-wakefulness. It is a heavy heart, a plastic planter. It promises nothing but a space for growth, a place to put your deepest, darkest desires. He who plants a garden, plants a sorrow. This is the truth. A bird in a cage, a gilded prison, a feather duster with a song, a lonely note in an empty room. This is the steel-bird of the tarmac, the perfect kenning for a caged existence. He sings for his supper, his freedom the prize. The judge, a man with a monocle, a pocket watch, a twitch in his eye. He marks the score, a tally of a soul, a price on a life and a dream. This is the blueprint. This is the plan. It is a masterpiece of thought.

II. The Zenith

The hostas, a deep blue, a surreal shade, a color that doesn't exist in nature. A lie, a beautiful lie, a deception, a fantasy. This is the lie in its perfection, a Remez of a thousand lies before it. They grow in the shade, the shadows, the darkness. They promise low maintenance, but they demand everything. They are a perfect, a flawless, a fabricated mirage.

He says: "They promise low maintenance. It is a simple truth."

I say: "My brother, that is the flaw in the flawless. They are not low maintenance; they are a Derash on the nature of need. They are a parasitic garden. You are not a gardener;

you are a host. My commentary is on your commentary. The Derash of the drain is your own weakness, not theirs."

He says: "You speak of a flaw in the flawless? A philosophical discussion might veer into an absurdly detailed critique of a restaurant menu. That is the true flaw. That is the nature of need, a perverse tenderness for the inevitable fall."

I am a box, a bird, a hosta. I hold a secret, I sing a song, I am a lie. I am a contest, a competition, a cage. I am a garden, a grave, a ghost. I am here, I am there, I am nowhere. I am everything, I am nothing. I am...

III. The Collapse

I am the song that has no end, a hatfield-and-north-improvisation on a broken piano. The Bolex is running now, the sound is a cacophony of shattered memories. The gilded cage is a single, beautiful wire. I am the garden and the grave. (The Shakespearean scaffolding, broken.) I am... a poem, a story, a silence. I am. I am a human. I am a box. I am a lie.

I am.

I am.

I am...

...

The final word is not spoken. It is a whispered documentation of a final, magnificent act. The final curtain is silence.

BRWAY

On Broadway, in Bangor, Maine
a spider–
not merely a creature but a celestial compass,
a pregnant wolf prowling the dark–
her abdomen: a globe of silent stars,
carrying uncounted futures–
egg sacs like orbiting planets, tethered to spinnerets,
her legs: cosmic meridians,
the horizon of her body–
the street–
a sprawling constellation of asphalt,
a universe of neon and noise–
the city's pulse,
the heartbeat of Broadway–
where her babies emerge–
tiny galaxies spilling out,
scattering across the tarmac–
they crawl,
they climb,
they crowd her back–
dorsal as the night sky,
a nebula of trembling bodies–
the street's gravity–
pulling, pushing,
a celestial dance of survival–
"如織天網，蛛絲織命."
"Rú zhī tiānwǎng, zhū sī zhī mìng."
"Like a woven heaven's net, spider silk weaves destiny."
In ancient China, the sages saw the web as a celestial map–
"The spider's silk is the thread of Heaven,"
they whispered,
"woven into the fabric of fate."

The web, a divine network, guiding mortals through darkness–
a mirror of the cosmos,
a silent astrolabe spun from silk–
each strand a star's delicate thread,
each knot a destiny–
"The universe is woven,"
they said,
"by unseen hands."
Her eyes–luminous orbs,
mirroring flickering city lights,
seeing in the dark with the third eye–
a retroreflective tapetum lucida–
eyes glowing back at streetlamp beams,
a celestial glow–
eyes like compass needles,
pointing–
north of fear,
north of endless sprawl–
"Caeli oculi sunt, et orbis paries, et tela sua stellae."
"The eyes of the heavens are the walls of the sphere, and their webs are stars."
Her eyes–luminous orbs,
mirroring flickering city lights,
seeing in the dark with the third eye–
a retroreflective tapetum lucida–
eyes glowing back at streetlamp beams,
a celestial glow–
eyes like compass needles,
pointing–
north of fear,
north of endless sprawl–
In ancient India, starlight is a sacred guide–
The astrolabe, a sacred tool,

a bridge between worlds–
reading the heavens,
finding the way home–
“The universe spins on the loom of time,”
they declared,
“woven by divine hands.”
She bears them–
a mother star,
a universe cradled in her fragile shell–
her egg sac–
a globe of spun silver,
a celestial sphere,
attached–held tight–
a tiny astrolabe of survival–
mapping night’s secrets,
measuring the altitude of hope,
the azimuth of dread–
In Middle English, the web of fate–“wyrd”–
a tapestry spun by unseen hands–
“Wyrd is the web that woveth our days,”
they say–
each strand a story,
each knot a destiny–
the web, the loom of life–
“Woven in the night, by the unseen loom,”
they whisper.
She is the navigator–
an ancient loom spun anew–
her web, her compass, her fate–
a living astrolabe in the city's chaos–
mapping survival through the night.
And I stand here,

a human observer–
mapping her movements,
her celestial course–
a living astrolabe of streetlight,
of survival,
of the unending night–
Her babies–
small suns spilling across Broadway,
their flickering light a testament–
to the universe's unyielding hope,
to the endless cycle of birth and survival–
I wonder–
how far can she see?
how far can we see–
in this city of asphalt and neon,
where the spider's silent,
pregnant with stars,
her eyes shining like distant galaxies?
And in the web of streets and stars,
the voices of ages whisper–
"We are all spiders, weaving our fates in the night,
guided by stars, pulled by webs of destiny,"
from China's silk threads,
from Rome's divine oculi,
from England's wyrd spun from the loom–
we are woven into this great celestial web,
a tapestry of light and shadow,
web and star, fate and craft,
forever spinning, forever seeking–
the way home.

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